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C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 000394

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/9/2018
TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: FATA: KHYBER OPERATION TRANSITIONS TO NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A) PESHAWAR 379, B) PESHAWAR 348

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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) A military operation in the Bara area of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas' (FATA) Khyber agency has given way to negotiations with tribesmen. Khyber's Political Agent (PA) has prepared a list of demands that he intends to deliver to militant leaders with whom he believes he is negotiating from a position of strength. The PA is already thinking of enforcement mechanisms which include levying heavy fines and having Frontier Corps forces stationed nearby and ready to respond.

¶2. (C) Khyber's PA believes that the "successful" operation has bought him six to twelve months of breathing space that he intends to use to "consolidate" the GOP's presence in Khyber. Both the FATA Secretary for Law and Order and Khyber's PA told post separately that Frontier Corps forces would soon move to the Mangori area of Khyber agency (near Warsak) and the Mitchni area on the Peshawar/Khyber/Mohmand border. While both officials were relatively upbeat in their appraisal of the Bara operation, it is still too soon to tell whether upcoming operations will meet with a similarly small measure of militant resistance. End Summary.

Readout on Bara Operation

¶3. (C) FATA Secretary for Law and Order, Ghulam Qadir and Khyber's Political Agent (PA), Tariq Hayat Khan told post in separate meetings on July 7 that military operations in Khyber's Bara area have given way to negotiations with tribal leaders. Qadir said that Mangal Bagh was not apprehended in the operations and is playing a leading role in negotiations with the GOP. According to both Qadir and Tariq, the operation has had very few casualties due to the mission's limited objectives and the fact that "miscreants" did not resist as troops captured and demolished militant hideouts. Four Frontier Corps troops were killed and three others were injured, however, in a militant ambush on July 8 which Khyber's PA attributed to "carelessness" by the Frontier Corpsmen. One alleged militant was also killed during the first day of the operations when he failed to stop at a security checkpoint.

¶4. (C) Khyber's PA expressed his opinion that "successful" military operations in Khyber's Bara area have helped to

reestablish the writ of the government. According to the PA, warlord Mangal Bagh's followers are defecting from his Lashkar-i-Islam organization and government offices are reopening in the area. Lashkar-i-Islam continues to battle with a rival group, Ansar-ul Islam in the Tirah Valley. Tariq claimed to have played a role in instigating the current round of clashes which have left more than a dozen Ansar and Lashkar-i-Islam fighters dead.

15. (C) The PA conceded, however, that he was not given a sufficient amount of troops to carry out a "proper operation" against Mangal Bagh; only two wings of Frontier Corps troops (approximately 1,000 troops) were assigned to the Bara Operation. (Note: Tariq has previously expressed frustration over his inability to procure the necessary troops to tackle Mangal Bagh early in his tenure as Khyber's PA, ref. B. End note.) Ghulam Qadir, however, reasoned that the two wings were "sufficient." The "strike force" portion of the two Frontier Corps wings that were deployed to Bara will likely depart the agency in three to four days, but the "static" deployment will remain in the area to ensure law and order.

Another Peace Deal in the Making?

16. (C) Khyber's PA said that a group of 18 tribal elders representing a Bara peace jirga had approached his office and offered to broker a deal between the GOP and "miscreants" in Khyber agency. The PA prepared an "undertaking" (a list of GOP demands) that would be conveyed via the peace jirga to Afridi tribal elders in Bara. According to the PA, the undertaking contains the following provisions:

- Tribes will prohibit parallel government activities.
- Tribes will prohibit cross-border attacks.
- Tribes will prohibit militant training camps.
- Tribes will prevent militants from carrying out activities in neighboring tribal agencies. (Note: Mangal Bagh's group has ventured into the neighboring Orakzai agency and clashed with Ansar-ul Islam activists there. End note.)
- Tribes will prohibit attacks on GOP security forces.
- Tribes will not provide sanctuary to foreign fighters.
- Tribesmen will not carry personal firearms on government property.
- Tribesmen will not carry heavy weapons anywhere in Khyber agency.
- Tribes will provide protection to both GOP and foreigners who are carrying out development work in Khyber.

17. (C) Tariq expected that several of the above provisions would be "softened" during subsequent rounds of negotiations, but insisted that he is bargaining from a "position of strength." According to both the Secretary for Law and Order and Khyber's PA, 26 of the 92 "miscreants" captured since the commencement of operations in Bara on June 28 are "hardcore" militants. These 26 prisoners will not be released in exchange for implementing the GOP's conditions. Khyber's PA was also quick to differentiate this undertaking from the ones in South Waziristan where the political administration is facing "jihadis."

Enforcement

18. (C) Should tribesmen accept the PA's conditions, an Assistant Political Agent would oversee a committee designed to ensure compliance with its provisions. Khyber's PA said that a penalty of 50 million Rupees (approximately USD 735,000) would be levied on tribes found to be in violation of the agreement. Further, the PA is authorized to suspend payments and Khassadar appointments to the offending tribe. Finally, the PA said that Frontier Corps troops would be "standing by" to enforce the undertaking if necessary.

Breathing Space

19. (C) Khyber's PA reasoned that the operation in Bara and a subsequent understanding between the GOP and the tribes would

create six to twelve months of "breathing space" for the GOP to "consolidate" its position. He emphasized the importance of speeding up the justice system in Khyber to deny militants an avenue for garnering public support. Tariq said that he was attempting to bring in additional magistrates to help clear an "intimidating" backlog of court cases. Finally, he requested that the United States provide communication, mobility and ammunition supplies to Khassadar forces in Khyber to empower them to confront militants who now regularly outgun and outmaneuver them.

Future Operations

¶10. (C) Both Ghulam Qadir and Tariq Hayat Khan separately said that Frontier Corps troops would next move to the Mangori area of Khyber agency (located near Warsak) and Mitchni (a suburb on the Khyber/Mohmand/Peshawar Border). Qadir stated that the Mitchni operations would prevent Mohmand-based militants from "coming toward Peshawar." According to Qadir, these two operations would pave the way for a future operation in Mohmand agency. Khyber's PA stated that he would like to conduct a "clean up operation" in Landi Kotal in order to create a "sterile corridor" around the Tirah Valley until he could requisition enough troops to carry out an operation there.

Comment

¶11. (C) The operation in Khyber's Bara area appears to be the opening salvo of a wider GOP plan to secure Peshawar's troubled flanks. While both Qadir and Tariq were relatively upbeat in their appraisal of the Bara operation, it is still too soon to tell whether upcoming operations will meet with a similarly small measure of militant resistance.

VIA